

Transit Oriented Development Systems

Bridging Land Use and Transportation Planning

Transit Nodes and Corridors: A Component of Sustainable Land Use

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is a compact, mixed-use residential / commercial area designed to maximize access to public transit. A TOD neighborhood typically has a center with a train stop, surrounded by relatively high-density development with progressively lower-density development spreading outwards from the center. Planned correctly, a TOD will attract talent by providing a mix of housing types within walking distance to jobs, shopping and recreation.

Focusing infill development and redevelopment within established infrastructure and near fixed route transit service stops make efficient use of infrastructure and land, and allows for increased economic development and tax base without overburdening rural roads or requiring sewer and water expansion. TOD neighborhoods are able to accommodate more residential and commercial space within a smaller amount of land, consuming less land with roads and parking lots as personal mobility without the use of a car becomes more feasible. By concentrating otherwise sprawled development in this manner, TOD also has the potential to reduce development pressures in rural areas. By coordinating infill and redevelopment and transit investment with the preservation of open space and agricultural lands, communities can retain the vast majority of their rural character, protect natural features, more efficiently provide services and retain a sense of place that translates to a vibrant and sustainable community structure.

TOD characteristics have also been directly and indirectly related to a variety of significant public benefits including improved economic stability and public health. In addition to creating vibrant community centers which attract a variety of people, especially the talent attributed to the new economy, public transportation revitalizes neighborhoods, increases social interaction and pedestrian activity, enhances safety, and helps create a sense of "place" that will help make a community unique. Investment in public transit often serves as a catalyst for private investment and results in higher and more stable property values. Federal Transportation Administration statistics show one dollar invested in public transit translates into six dollars of economic benefit to the community.

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) 2035 Regional Development Forecast predicts that Washtenaw County will grow by 11% between 2005 and 2035, gaining over 38,000 new residents, many expected to locate in the county's townships. By integrating sustainable transportation and land use patterns according to the TOD models illustrated in this report, new residents will be able to be accommodated in existing urban areas and planned transit centers.

In order to encourage transportation options and sustainable land use, areas within walkable distance to transit should be developed at higher densities than the surrounding landscape. In urban areas, transit oriented development is often created by focusing on building reuse or infill to bring the area surrounding a transit stop to greater degree of density. In more suburban areas, new development is clustered around a station at an increased density and underutilized or vacant sites are developed.

A Transit Corridor is generally described as have a series of transit nodes or TOD centers. These nodes exhibit high density mixed use located within a radius of one-quarter to one-half mile (0.4 to 0.8 km) from a transit stop. Along a transit route, a series of nodes are interconnected to neighborhoods and other services along the transit line. Areas outside of the TOD node radius continue to exhibit pedestrian friendly mixed use and reduced parking requirements, although often to a lesser degree and a slightly lower density than closer to the transit stop.

Some communities in Washtenaw County have identified centers or corridors appropriate for infill and focused development. Corridors with potential for becoming sustainable TOD corridors are depicted on the map on the opposite page.



Objective

Promote the development of compact, mixed-use, transit-oriented development nodes and corridors.

Recommendation Transit Center Uses

Encourage balanced mixed-use nodes and corridors with pedestrian connections and streetscapes, a variety of housing options (such as townhomes and apartments at densities of 8 to 25 dwelling units per acre in nodes and to a lesser degree in corridors), and minimum floor area ratios for non-residential uses, requiring above-store residential units.

Recommendation TOD Node and Corridor Location

Work with local governments to identify TOD node and corridor locations, funding options and to develop appropriate plans and regulations

Recommendation TOD Infrastructure

Coordinate infrastructure investment and service provision to encourage mixed-use, pedestrian friendly infill development within nodes and corridors, discourage sprawl and provide tax base revenue sharing where needed.

Recommendation TOD Buffer

Discourage transit oriented development from sprawling into surrounding areas by updating local master plans and zoning ordinances to provide a clear separation of uses between activity centers and surrounding low density residential uses.

Recommendation TOD Standards and Overlays

Work with local governments to draft and adopt appropriate TOD area regulations and design standards for building height, setbacks, landscaping, transit and nonmotorized amenities, public gathering spaces, lighting and other significant elements.

